17. A method as in claim 11 wherein said step of including quasi-conductive fibers comprises including fibers sized and shaped to have a corona discharge threshold voltage at their ends in the range of about three to about four kilovolts and an end of a looped one of said sized and shaped quasi-conductive fibers has a corona discharge threshold voltage of about nine kilovolts.--

REMARKS

A Petition for a Three Month Extension of Time is being filed concurrently herewith.

Claims 11-17 are currently pending in the above-identified application. Claims 11-12 have been rejected. New claims 13-17 have been added. Claims 11-12 have been amended without prejudice or disclaimer to the subject matter recited therein and solely for the purpose of furthering the prosecution of the above-identified application. Applicants respectfully reserve the right to claim the subject matter of the pre-amended claims and any other subject matter contained in the specification in this or any other application. Applicants respectfully request reconsideration of the outstanding rejections in light of the foregoing amendments and following remarks.

Claims 11-12 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103 as being obvious over Pappas et al. Specifically, the Office action states that Pappas et al. discloses a method for reducing the energy of electrostatic discharge in flexible fabric containers, and that the method includes the steps of providing a woven fabric and forming the fabric into a container. The Office action concedes that Pappas et al. fails to disclose that the fabric allows the flow of electricity through the fabric at a rate to discharge below about 100 nanocoulombs per individual

discharge when the fabric is charged at greater than about negative 10,000 volts. Nonetheless, the Office action states that Pappas et al. teaches adjusting the electrical resistivity of the fabric by employing an antistatic agent in the coating and/or incorporating conductive fibers into the fabric, and thus it would be obvious for one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of the invention to have optimized the electrical resistivity of the fabric as taught by Pappas et al. Applicants respectfully traverse.

As amended, claims 11-12 recite a method for reducing the energy of electrostatic discharge in an ungrounded type flexible fabric container system for use in a combustible environment. The method of claim 11 comprises the steps of providing a woven fabric configured to form the flexible fabric container having side walls, a closed end and an open end, and including within said woven fabric a plurality of quasi-conductive fibers, wherein the electrical resistivity of said woven fabric allows the flow of electricity through the fabric at a rate to discharge of below about one-hundred nanocoulombs per individual discharge with the fabric charged at greater than about negative ten thousand volts. The method of claim 12 adds that the step of including quasi-conductive fibers adjusts the electrical resistivity of said woven fabric to allow the flow of electricity through the fabric at a rate to discharge of between about four nanocoulombs to about thirty nanocoulombs per individual discharge with the fabric charged at greater than about negative ten thousand volts.

Pappas et al. provides no teaching or suggestion of including quasi-conductive fibers to its woven fabric container. Pappas et al. is directed to weaving conductive fibers, those having a surface resistivity of no more than 10^5 $\Omega/\square$. Pappas et al. fails to disclose the use of quasi-conductive fibers, those fibers having a surface resistivity of between about 10^9 and 10^{12} $\Omega/\square$. Furthermore, Pappas et al. fails to disclose a method for reducing the energy

of electrostatic discharges. Instead, Pappas et al. discusses fabricating a container which allows static charges to dissipate to the atmosphere almost as soon as generated (Column 2, lines 42-47). Thus, Pappas et al. is concerned with the rapidity of removing static discharges from a fabric container, which differs from the claims that recite a method for reducing the electrostatic discharges.

New claims 13-17 ultimately depend from claim 11 and add important limitations which further distinguish these claims from the cited reference. No new matter has been added in these claims and sufficient support for these claims exists in the specification as filed.

In view of the above, each of the presently pending claims in this application is believed to be in condition for allowance. Accordingly, the Examiner is respectfully requested to withdraw the outstanding rejections and objections and pass this application to issue.

Dated: June 28, 1999

Respectfully submitted,

By W.E. Powell

William E. Powell, III
Registration No.: 39,803
DICKSTEIN SHAPIRO MORIN
& OSHINSKY LLP
2101 L Street NW
Washington, DC 20037-1526
(202) 785-9700

Attorneys for Applicant